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The Effect of Varying Audiences on Shakespeare's Work

By

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study is to attempt to discern what effect varying audiences may have had on Shakespeare's work as a playwright. The more familiar one becomes with Shakespeare's plays, the more conscious one is of a difference in technique and tone which divides the plays into two groups. A careful analysis of them points to the possibility that the dramatist wrote each play for a particular stage and a particular audience. A play written for presentation before the Queen and a select group of the aristocracy at Whitehall might be expected to differ in quality and technique from a play written for the motley crowd which frequented the Globe Theatre. I shall endeavor to establish that this difference did actually exist and that Shakespeare's plays can be so divided.

Chapter I

A DESCRIPTION OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC THEATRES
IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

We know from existing records that there were several types of stages available for the initial offering of new plays. Many plays were first staged in one or other of the public theatres,--The Theatre, The Globe, The Fortune, The Curtain, The Swan, or the theatre at Newington Butte. (1) The public theatres, it is assumed, were similar in structure and all entered to the public in general. (2) Other plays were first presented at the so-called private theatres, Blackfriars and Whitefriars. These theatres were private in name only, for they actually entered to anyone who could afford to pay a shilling for admittance. (3) The price, exorbitant in those days, insured a more cultured audience, but neither theatre was available to Shakespeare's company until 1609 when Blackfriars was taken over from the Children of the Revels, a company which had occupied it for ten years. (4)

(1) F.H. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, Oxford University Press, 1923, Vol. II 379, Vol. III 50.

(2) Ibid., Vol. II p.437.

(3) Ibid., p.369.

(4) Ibid., p.510.

The third type of stage was that found at the court, and there is every likelihood that some of Shakespeare's plays were written for this type of ultra-private presentation. Plays were enacted at the Universities. There was evidently a private stage at Gray's Inn in 1594 and one at the Middle Temple in 1602. It is very likely that plays were frequently presented in the homes of some of the prominent families though I have found no mention of records which substantiate the surmise. The point which I wish to stress is that Shakespeare was not confined to the public theatre. The differences between the public and private stages are fundamental in this discussion.

From contemporary sketches, descriptions, and a builder's specifications, we get a remarkably clear picture of the structure and plan of a typical public theatre. (1) Against one wall of the theatre, there was an inner stage or *domus*. The *domus* was provided with a curtain which remained drawn when this stage was not in use. On either side of the *domus*, there were tiring rooms with doors which opened to the outer stage and likely with entrances to the *domus*. In front of the *domus*, a wide outer stage projected half way across the yard. Twenty-seven feet separated the curtain of the *domus* of

(1) Ibid., p. 436.

the Fortune Theatre from the front of the outer stage. The same stage was forty-three feet wide (1). There is no evidence regarding the width of the stage of the Globe Theatre, but since the Globe had an internal diameter of eighty-four feet, the stage must have measured forty-two feet to the front of the platea. Above the domos there was a balcony. A roof, known as "the heavens" extended over most of the outer stage and was supported near the front by two pillars. Above the heavens, there was a hut which held certain machinery for handling properties or for producing aerial effects.

The walls of a public theatre must have been remarkably high for there was provision for three tiers of balconies around three sides of the building (2). This meant that part of the audience must have viewed the performances across the stage rather than from the front. There is evidence that the stage balcony was occasionally used to seat certain important members of the audience. (3) The balconies were protected from the elements by an over-hanging roof, but the yard or pit where the

(1) Ibid., p. 528.

(2) Ibid., p. 530.

(3) Ibid., pp. 365 & 534.

"groundlings" stood to view the play was open to the sun and rain. The entry fee to the Globe was one penny. To get into certain balcony booths, customers had to pay extra, (1). The choice balcony booths were those that looked down on the side of the stage for they were nearer to the stage and farther from the mob which crowded the pit.

There is no record of a first-performance of a Shakespearian play. We know with considerable certainty the public theatres in which the Burbage players were playing from time to time, and we have some degree of certainty regarding the dates when most of the plays were written. If we can determine the plays that were written for a public stage, we can perhaps assume in what theatre the play was first produced. For plays written for a private stage the problem is more difficult. Certainly very few if any of the plays could have been written for the stage in Blackfriars. According to Sir E. K. Chambers, the Company performed a play before queen Elizabeth and her maids of honor at Blackfriars December 31, 1602, (2) seven years before the Kings's Men acquired the property. If his statement is correct, there may have been other

(1) Ibid., p.532.

(2) Ibid., Vol. II, p207.

occasions when the Company used Blackfriars. Such occasions, however, must have been rare, for the first Quarto to mention Blackfriars appeared in 1622. We know that The Lord Chamberlain's Company and later The King's Company were frequently called upon to present plays at Whitehall. In four years from 1603 to 1607, there were forty plays presented at court (1). Information regarding the court entertainments has been preserved in the expense accounts of the Master of Revels, but only rarely was the name of the play mentioned. Some plays may have been written for presentation in the homes of the nobility. From Manningham's diary, we learn that Twelfth Night was acted at the Middle Temple, February 2, 1602. (2) I suggest that during the winter season when the weather interfered with profitable activities in the public theatres, Shakespeare's Company was kept busy with entertainments here and there adding their bit to winter festivities in the gay capital. I further suggest that certain plays might have been written for special occasions such as Twelfth Night celebrations, weddings, and command performances.

(1) Ibid., p. 213.

(2) Ibid., p. 207.

The first private plays were almost certainly academic. The school stage which specialized in classical plays was set up in an interior auditorium where space was limited. The pattern of the stage had followed the classical play from Italy. When the time came for the Queen's revellers to set up a court stage, it is likely they applied the classic stage as the more practical for interior productions. The pattern set by the court would likely be adopted for all private productions and possibly, too, in the semi-private theatres such as Blackfriars where the child performers were under court sponsorship. (1)

The description which Sir E. K. Chambers gives us of the court stage is actually an accumulation of much scattered evidence. The size of an interior stage was, of course, governed by the amount of space available. The Cockpit which was a small auditorium on the grounds of Whitehall and which was used for the presentation of plays in the reign of James I, had a very small stage. The private stage was box-like as if the inner stage of the public theatre had been enlarged and the outer apron all but cut away. Drapes of painted canvas were used extensively. Two or more lath and canvas domes were provided. (2) Chambers describes a French stage thus,

(1) Ibid., Vol. III, p.47.

(2) Ibid., Vol. III, p.21.

"The stage at the Hotel de Bourgogne had room for five such 'maisons', one in the middle of the back wall, two in the angles between the back wall and the side walls and two standing forward against the side walls.

"A 'maison' might be a unit of architecture such as a palace, a country house, a castle, a prison, a temple, a tavern or a landscape such as a garden, a wood, a rock, a cave, a sea and very often it represented an interior such as a chamber with a bed in it." (1)

Of course, the number of domus depended on the size of the stage and on the needs of the play. No balcony was possible, for the ceiling and the proscenium arch limited the height of the stage. During the presentation of masks at Whitehall, curtains were used across the arch and sometimes they served as traverses from the back to the front of the stage. (2) It is quite likely they were used in the same way for court plays.

Thus far I have endeavored to picture the conditions which form a background to the problem at hand, that of deciding which of Shakespeare's plays were written specifically for the public theatre and which were written for the private stage. In my argument there are various factors which I wish to stress, factors which must have influenced Shakespeare as he wrote his plays. They are: the presence or absence of a balcony, the size

(1) Ibid., p.16.

(2) Ibid., p.25

of the stage, the indoor setting of the private theatre
contrasted with the outdoor setting of the public
theatre, the night performance of the private theatre
contrasted with the afternoon performance of the public
theatre and finally, the number of actors required.

Chapter II

A DIVISION OF THE SHAKESPEARIAN PLAYS INTO PUBLIC PLAYS
AND PRIVATE PLAYS AND THE BASIS ON WHICH THIS DIVISION
IS MADE.

Since we cannot tell from existing records the theatres
in which Shakespeare's plays were first presented,
we are forced to go to the plays themselves for
evidence. I have made a survey of the plays for
facts which, when considered in conjunction with
existing records, might serve to establish the type
of theatre for which each play was written. We
shall then know for what he was writing. The
following is a tabulation of my survey.

TABULATION OF RESULTS OF SURVEY.

PLAY <u>Public</u>	DATE	BALCONY	Inner stage (domus)			Inner stage sequence	Entrance	Lapse	Outdoor scene	Indoor scenes	Leaves-dropping	Where play was acted.
			Outer stage	Inner stage	B	G	D					
Hen. VI Pt. I	1591	I, iv	27	0			E.L.		19	8		G
Hen. VI Pt. II	1591	IV, v	23	1					15	9		
Hen. VI Pt. III	1592	IV, iii, 16	28	0					19	9		
Rich. III	1593	III, v	22	1					14	9		
Rich. II	1595	III, iii, 62	16	3			E.L.		9	10		Globe, Publikely, At Sea.
Hen. IV Pt. I	1597		16	3					10	9		
Hen. IV Pt. II	1598		15	2			E.L.		10	7		Publikely.
Hen. V	1599	III, iii	22	0			E.L.		15	7		Court.
King John	1594	II, i, 201	14	2			E.L.		12	4		
Henry VIII	1612	V, i	15	1					6	10		Globe.
Merchant of Venice	1594	II, vi, 26	13	7			E.L.		11	9		Globe, Court.
Romeo & Juliet	1595	II, ii	16	8			E.L.		13	11		Globe, Publikely.
As You Like It	1600		18	1			E.L.		16	3		

Titus Andronicus	1594	I, i V, ii, 8 V, iii, 66	12	2	12	2	
Julius Caesar	1599		16	1	15	2	E.L.
Timon of Athens	1605-07	V, iv	12	5	7	10	E.L.
Carolanus	1608	I, iv, 12	27	2	26	3	E.L.
Anthony & Cleopatra	1607	IV, iv	29	6	16	19	E.L.
Two Gentlemen of Verona	1590	IV, ii, 85	19	9	11	8	
Taming of the Shrew	1596	Induction in Sc. ii	10	3	7	6	E.L. Globe, Blackfriars.
Troilus & Cressida	1601-03		22	1	20	3	E.L. Globe.
<u>Private</u>							
Comedy of Errors	1589-93		11	0	8	3	Gray's Inn 1594.
Love's Labour's Lost	1589-95		9	0	9	0	E.D. Court, Blackfriars.
All's Well	1602		22	1	8	15	E.D.
			TOTAL		283	158	
					64%	36%	

Much Ado	1598	12	4	6	10	E.D.	Court, Publikey
Twelfth Night	1600-02	10	8	10	8		Middle Temple 1602.
Merry Wives	1599	12	11	11	12		Court 1602-1604
Measure for Measure	1603	9	7	4	12	E.D.	Court 1604
Hamlet	1602	8	12	5	15	E.D.,	London? -- Sea 1607
Winter's Tale	1610	8	6	3	11		Court 1611-1612
Midsummer Night's Dream	1595	7	2	5	4		Publikey
Tempest	1611	9	0	9	0		Court 1611-1612
Cymbeline	1609-10	17	10	E.L. 14	13		? 1610-11
Macbeth	1606	24	3	E.L. 13	14		Court 1606, Globe 1611
Othello	1604	10	4	8	6		Court, Blackfriars, Globe
King Lear	1605	22	3	15	10		Court 1607 & 1608
Pericles	1607	9	11	6	14		Globe.
Total				138	147		
Per Cent.				48%	52%		

In our search for plays written for the private stage our problem becomes in a sense one of elimination. Sixteen plays are quickly eliminated, the plays which require a balcony. They are Henry VI Parts I, II, III, Richard III, Richard II, Henry V, King John, Henry VIII, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, Titus Andronicus, Timon of Athens, Carolianna, Antony and Cleopatra, Two Gentlemen of Verona, and The Taming of the Shrew.

Column "A" of the above table records the scenes which require a balcony. One might hesitate about being too dogmatic in the elimination of this group were it not that, as will be seen later, the plays in other respects fit into the pattern of those evidently written for the public stage. It must be admitted that a balcony scene could not be handled on a private stage by the use of some platform device. In fact Henry V and The Merchant of Venice were presented at court. At the same time, it is noteworthy that not another play of the twenty-one which I ascribe to the public theatre has a record of private performance.

A further elimination of public plays may be achieved by what, for want of a better name, I have chosen to call the "entrance lapse." This distinction results from the relative sizes of the public and

private stages. The public stage extended so far into the entrance of the theatre that persons at the forward end of the apron were as much as forty feet from the actors entering from the back of the stage. (1) Consequently, actors on the stage could make prolonged and sometimes critical remarks about newcomers on the stage before the newcomers could get within hearing distance of them. A very good example of the entrance lapse occurs in As You Like It, I, ii, 46. The following dialogue intervenes between the entrance of Touchstone and his first remarks. He has come to deliver a message, so there is little likelihood of his pausing after his entrance.

CEL. "No? When Nature hath made a fair creature, may she not by Fortune fall into the fire? Though Nature hath given us wit to fight at Fortune, hath not Fortune sent in this fool to cut off the argument?"

ROS. "Indeed, there is Fortune too hard for Nature, when Fortune makes Nature's natural the utter off of Nature's wit."

CEL. "For adventure this is not Fortune's work neither but Nature's; who perceiving our natural wits too dull to reason of such galleries, hath sent this natural for our whetstone; for always the dullness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits. Now now, wit! whither wander you?"

Even on a stage so large, it is almost incredible that

(1) Ibid., Vol. II, p. 523.

as Touch could be said out of hearing of the clown. There is, however, a present belief that parts were spoken very rapidly on the Elizabethan stage. Certainly Touchstone could not have heard the conversation of the girls, for he says,

"Mistress you must come away to your father."

Had Touchstone heard the conversation, he would surely have retaliated in true Touchstone style. He would be compelled to do so in order to remain in character. Such a lapse could not have been possible on a private stage, for the newcomer was never more than a few feet from the actors already on the stage.

The following is a list of plays in which the entrance lapse occurs with specific instances cited. In column "D" of the table they are marked T.I.

Henry VI Part II I, iii, 7; V, i, 140

Henry VI, Part III I, i, 210; III, iii, 44

Richard II II, ii, 73

Henry IV Part II I, i, 28; I, i, 64; V, ii, 14

Henry V III, ii, 79; V, i, 15

King John III, iv, 16; V, ii, 64

The Merchant of Venice I, i, 57

Romeo and Juliet I, i, 38; I, i, 64; I, i, 163;
II, iv, 38; III, i, 95

- As You Like It I, ii, 46; I, ii, 80; V, ii, 15
Julius Caesar I, ii, 178; I, iii, 131
Titus of Athens I, i, 174; II, ii, 46
Cymbeline I, i, 51; I, vi, 20; IV, ii, 7
Antony and Cleopatra I, ii, 11
The Taming of the Shrew I, ii, 122; IV, iv, 7
Timon and Lucius II, ii, 71; II, iii, 111
Cymbeline I, iv, 20; II, iii, 36
Macbeth I, ii, 44

The fact that examples of the entrance lobby are not numerous may suggest that most of the action occurred at or near the rear of the outer stage.

The third point in the argument has to do with the forum. In the public theatre, there was only the one inner stage which could serve as a bedroom or inner chamber separate from the outer stage. There is no evidence that separate forums were used as was the custom on the private stage though tents must have been pitched on the agnion for certain of the war scenes. Treveries could not have been used to give additional rooms, nor could the laths and canvas sides have been used because they would have interfered with the view of that part of the audience which occupied the galleries on either side of the stage. The scheme could be used only when the entire audience remained in front of the stage and could

look into each other as its curtain was drawn. The use of two or more kinds made possible continuous action with no pauses necessary for changing interior properties. It is therefore essential that interior scenes which represent different places and which follow each other in uninterrupted sequence must have been written for performance on a private stage.

An examination of the plays reveals that several plays have no interior scenes. Others have an occasional interior scene but never two in succession. In some there are several interior scenes, but they alternate with exterior scenes in a manner so evident as to be hardly a matter of chance. The alternating pattern may be demonstrated thus:

A Merchant of Venice

Exterior	o	o	o	o-o-o	o	o	o	o-o-o-o
Interior		/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Romeo and Juliet

Exterior	o-o	o-o-o-o	o-o	o-o-o	o	o	o	o-o
Interior		/	/	/	/	/	/	/

This alternation of interior and exterior scenes would be necessary where there is only one house. Such plays, I believe, were intended for the public stage.

On the other hand, there are a number of plays which have a good deal of differing interior scenes with no

interspersed external scenes to permit change of properties. Thus, at least two changes are necessary. I include here three examples with the scenes indicated and the interior scenes labelled with letters to indicate differing interior settings.

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Exterior	I,i I,ii	II,i	III,ii III,iii	IV,i	IV,ii	IV,iii IV,iiii IV,v
Interior	A B	A	C A	C A	C A C A D A	
	I,iii I,iv	II,ii	III,iii IV,i	IV,ii	IV,iii IV,iv IV,v IV,vi	

Twelfth Night

Exterior	II,ii	II,i II,ii	IV,i IV,ii	IV,iii IV,iv IV,v	IV,vi IV,vii
Interior	A	B A B	B A	B	B
	I,i	I,ii I,iii I,iv	III,iii III,iv	III,ii	IV,ii

Measure For Measure

Exterior	II,ii III,iii III,iv	IV,ii IV,iii	IV,iv IV,v IV,vi
Interior	A	B C C	C D A
	I,i	II,i II,ii III,i	III,ii III,iii III,iv

I have indicated under column "C" of the survey table the plays in which interior sequences occur.

Another line of attack which the survey chart reveals (column "E") is based on the number of indoor and outdoor scenes which occur in the plays. We are assured that plays in the public theatres were presented during daylight hours, (1) whereas private performances were held at night. It seems likely that a dramatist would have this factor of daytime or nighttime presentation in mind while composing his play. The survey reveals a time

(1) Ibid., Vol. II, p.543

interesting results. The tendency for outdoor, daytime scenes to predominate is evident in plays which other distinguishing factors seem to ascribe to outdoor settings. Sixty-four percent of the scenes have outdoor settings while only thirty-six percent have indoor settings. In the case of the historical plays, the atmosphere is generally one of the out-of-doors, of war and of extreme activity. Many scenes occur in palaces and courts and are therefore indoor scenes, but they do not detract from the outdoor mood which is predominant.

The same is true of the comedies and tragedies which were written for the public stage. Nothing could be more external in mood than As You Like It where the ratio is 16 to 3 for outdoor scenes and Julius Caesar with its ratio of 15 to 2. In Timon of Athens the ratio is a reversal of the tendency, but in spite of the numerous interior scenes recurring early in the play, the movement is away from the palace and out to the forests and caves where Timon finds freedom from responsibilities which he found odious. I was surprised to find that outdoor scenes outnumbered indoor scenes in The Merchant of Venice and in Measure for Measure. In Antony and Cleopatra indoor scenes predominate because Cleopatra figures so largely in the play, but in spite of the

essence of tragedy which stalks the play, one feels the impact of the Egyptian sun.

On the other hand, we find the private theatre plays show a preponderance of indoor scenes. Even with the inclusion of a Comedy of Errors, Love's Labour's Lost, The Tempest, and King Lear in this group, the percentage of indoor scenes is fifty-two while forty-eight percent are outdoor scenes. We find also that several of the plays in this group, plays which have a larger portion of outdoor scenes, practically demand an artificially lighted stage, the kind of situation provided by the private theatre. Perhaps it is well, however, to examine each of the private theatre plays individually and to recount in each case the factors which provide evidence of the private origin of the plays.

The Comedy of Errors was written between the years 1579 and 1593 and perhaps even earlier. It is presumed to have been Shakespeare's first effort in dramatic composition, and it has abundant marks of immaturity. It has as a source the Plautus play, Menecmus, and it adheres to the classical tradition of the unitary. Beyond the classical style and the absence of a balcony scene, there is no mechanical device by which we can pin this

play to the private stage. The only mention that is made of its having been acted is a reference to a performance at Gray's Inn in 1594. Frances Yates, who made a careful study of Love's Labour's Lost, tells us something of the revels at Gray's Inn in 1594-95. She says,

"The members of Gray's Inn included several of the most powerful nobles of the land including the Earls of Northumberland, Southampton, Essex and Richmond." (1)

The Gray's Inn performance must therefore have been of a private nature. The classical element of the play and the evidence of early composition may suggest that it was originally written for a school stage. This conjecture may be supported by the fact that Pinch, a schoolmaster, is included in the dramatis personae. There seems no logical reason for so labelling Pinch unless as a good natured jibe which would appeal to students.

In certain respects Love's Labour's Lost is a companion piece to the Comedy of Errors. Sir W. R. Chambers sets the date of the composition at 1599. If he is correct, it too may have been composed for a school stage. Like the Comedy of Errors, it includes a schoolmaster in the dramatis personae. The play displays the same evidence of immaturity, a love of puns, stichomythia,

(1) Frances Yates, A Study of Love's Labour's Lost,

and all the other signs of youthful poetic excess.

Neilson, however, selects 1594 as a more likely date for the play because he sees an affinity to Romeo and Juliet despite its "artificiality and linguistic virtuosity." (1)

This is interesting, for Frances Yates sets the date at 1595. She suggests that Shakespeare was influenced by the evidence of gaiety which he saw at the Gray's Inn Revels in 1594-95 when the Comedy of Errors was presented.

Neilson says in his introduction to the play,

"What may be admitted, however, is that the satire and wit flashing through the play are constantly suggestive of more than a general object and may hint at more than meets the eye." (2)

Miss Yates believes that the good-natured satire was directed at the aristocratic members of Gray's Inn and that the theme is full of the light-hearted atmosphere characteristic of the Gray's Inn Revels. Further on she says,

"It was no doubt first performed at a private house, perhaps the Earl of Southampton's before an audience largely composed of ladies and gentlemen who had been present at the revels." (3)

Structurally, Love's Labour's Lost is definitely a classical type of play. The unity of place is more

(1) Neilson and Hill, William Shakespeare, Cambridge: 1942, p.53. Complete Plays and Poems.

(2) Ibid., p. 54.

(3) Op. cit., p. 162

restricted even than in The Comedy of Errors, for every scene is enacted in the same garden. There is no balcony needed and no case of entrance lapse. The play is so completely a problem of witty dialogue that the out-of-doors aspect may be ignored. Actually, there is nothing to prevent the play from being enacted on a public stage. However, the nature of the dialogue suggests a cultured audience and records point only to performances on private stages. In 1598 it was presented before Queen Elizabeth at court, and in 1604-5 it was presented at the court of James. A quarto published in 1631 refers to its presentation at Blackfriars.

There is some justification in the theory that All's Well That Ends Well is the play which Francis Meres in his 1598 list of Shakespearian plays refers to as Love's Labour's Won. No other existing play fits the earlier title so well. If the theory is true, the play becomes a sequel to Love's Labour's Lost and may have been presented to an audience similar to that at Gray's Inn in 1594-5. The technique of the dramatist is typical of that employed in private theatre plays though the evidence is not as conclusive as it is in the case of some others. No balcony was required, there are no "entrance lapses,"

and indoor scenes predominate. The interest of the play lies mainly in the plot and dialogue. The freedom with which Shakespeare introduces sexy dialogue may point to a private audience, for we find much less of this freedom in plays designed for the public theatre. As in Love's Labour's Lost, there are passages which might have been directly aimed at an aristocratic audience, but in this play there is less gaiety and more of the didactic tone. The King's speech (II, iii, 124-151) is an example of the didactic touch. Then there is the point of the hidden eavesdroppers. (IV, i). The dramatist seldom hides his characters on the public stage, for it was necessary to keep the view clear from three directions.

The only existing Quarto of Much Ado About Nothing was printed in 1600. The title page informs us that the play had been, "sundry times acted publickely." It is a play which could have been acted on a public stage with little difficulty, and it is certainly well suited to an afternoon performance. However, I am inclined to include it among the private plays for various reasons. What was said of the technique of All's Well is also true for this play. No balcony is needed, there are no "entrance lapses," and the majority of scenes are indoors. In this play, too, there is some eavesdropping. The

bower required in III, i, 33 would best be served by the projecting type of domus employed on the private stage. While the play is set in Arragon and the characters are supposed to be Italians, the setting, the characters and the dialogue are essentially English. There is much of that play of wit so affected by the fashionable young men of the day, and therefore it is a form of dialogue which would have delighted a fashionable audience. There is little of the action and roguery which would appeal to the occupants of the pit of a public theatre. Surely, had Shakespeare had the "groundlings" in mind as he wrote this play, he would have made more of the villain Don John and of the villainy of Boccacio (III, iii, 162-175). The fact that the play was presented before the court in 1612-13 would suggest that it had won a reputation among England's aristocracy.

A group of five plays which includes Twelfth Night, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Measure for Measure, Hamlet and A Winter's Tale was beyond any doubt planned for the private stage. Besides the fact that they require no balcony and that they have no "entrance lapse," these five plays demand some provision for staging interior sequences. Only a stage with two or more domus

could be used in that day when custom demanded continuous performance throughout the presentation of a play. (1) Furthermore, records of the period refer only to private performances of these plays.

The only reference to a performance of Twelfth Night is that of John Manningham in his Diary, dated Feb. 2, 1601-2. The play was evidently acted at the Middle Temple at approximately that date. His description of the play suggests that it was very new. One may assume that Twelfth Night had been written for presentation at the celebrations at court on Jan. 6.

This delightful comedy contains two plots, one of love romance and one of sheer comedy, yet both are beautifully interwoven. The story is set in Illyria, and the love theme retains some of the color of its Italian setting, but the scenes involving Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are as English as roast beef. Malvolio in his stiff-backed conceit is typical of the conventional English butler. Only an audience familiar with the plane of society portrayed in the play could properly appreciate and enjoy its humor.

The finest eavesdropping scene to be found in

(1) E. K. Chambers, Gen. Cit., Vol. III, p. 125.

Shakespeare's plays occurs in Twelfth Night. An eavesdropping scene must provide for the listeners a suitable hiding place where they will be hidden from the persons being spied upon and yet, where they will be visible to the audience. Such provision is possible when the audience is seated in front of the stage, but would hardly be convincing when part of the audience looks on from either side. We must remember that any obstruction on the apron of the public theatre would interfere with the view of some of the most influential members of the audience, those who occupied the side galleries. Actually, the presence of an eavesdropping scene in a play is, I believe, a most reliable bit of evidence that the play was written specifically for a private stage. In column "F" of the survey chart, I have indicated the plays in which eavesdropping occurs.

The Merry Wives of Windsor is said to have been written at the request of Queen Elizabeth who wished to see Sir John Falstaff in love. What Shakespeare has done to Sir John in this play seems to bear out the tradition. If the play was so inspired, it must have been first presented at Whitehall. Certainly, the play has all the ear-marks of a private piece and the only records of its performance are of performances at court in 1602 and in 1604.

In certain respects, Measure for Measure is a companion play to All's Well. In it, the stratagem of All's Well is repeated and the character of Perolles is redrawn in the person of Lucio. What I have said for All's Well can be said for this play. The plays are dated 1602 and 1603. It is remarkable that the dramatist should repeat his theme so soon unless urged to do so by the aristocratic audience which found All's Well so satisfying that it demanded more of the same. Neilson in his introduction to the play comments on the performance at Court on December 26, 1604, and actually assigns the composition to that year. He goes on to say,

"It was among the first of Shakespeare's plays to be given for James at Whitehall by Shakespeare's company, now the King's Men; and the lines I, i, 68-73 and II, iv, 27-30, touching upon the annoyance which well-intentioned public throngs may cause their rulers, seem calculated to please James, whose aversion to crowds was well known. The central stratagem in the plot links the play directly with All's Well and the splendid passages in III, i, 4-41, 118-132 and II, iv, 1-7 are unmistakably kin to the famous speeches in Hamlet." (1)

It seems reasonably certain that the Court performance of Measure for Measure on December 26, 1604, was its first presentation.

The records tell us that Hamlet was presented in

(1) Neilson & Mill, Op. cit., p. 390.

London in 1603 and at sea in 1607. The paucity of information is remarkable considering the volumes that have been written about this play in more recent times. Its present popularity is based on its great depth of dramatic power and on its disturbing psychological interest. The strength of its appeal to the intellect suggests that it was written for an intellectual audience. Hamlet is believed to have been written in 1602. Since its London performance occurred in 1603, and since the public theatres were all outside London, we have some justification for assuming that it was performed, and possibly first performed, at a private house. Structurally the play is ideally suited for presentation on a private stage. Perhaps, however, the best evidence is to be found in a passage in Act III of the play.

"O, it offends me to the soul to see a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise." (III, ii, 9-13.)

We don't have to go beyond Shakespeare's plays to discover that a sixteenth century Cockney had as much stiff-necked English pride as his present day counterpart and would be as quick to resent a slight. Shakespeare would not dare cast a slur at a group which formed a large portion of his public audience. It would be neither

mer

delicate or discreet. Any criticism, however, of the groundlings would, we may be sure, meet with the full approval of a purely aristocratic audience.

The Winter's Tale was seen by Simon Forman on May 15, 1611. Neilson believes that the play was written early that year. It is recorded in the accounts of the King's Revels that it was acted at court in the year 1611 and again in 1612-13. This information, combined with the fact that the play measures up in every detail to the qualities which we assign to the private stage, caused us to include The Winter's Tale among the plays which Shakespeare wrote for private presentation.

Two somewhat similar plays which I assign to the private stage are A Midsummer-Night's Dream and The Tempest. Both are highly poetic and are almost pure fantasy. Both would lose much of their beauty and mystery if presented in mid-afternoon in the bold and searching reality of the sun. They require a night-time setting where subdued lighting will add to the enchantment which the dramatist seeks to effect. There is some justification for the belief that A Midsummer-Night's Dream was written to celebrate some important wedding. Possible occasions are cited by Neilson in his introduction. (1)

The Dream requires a group of ten boys to act the part of ladies and fairies. If the play were presented at court, there would be available for these parts the child actors, then under the sponsorship of the Queen and her Master of Revels.

Known dates tie The Tempest very closely to the private theatre. It was written in 1611 and was acted the same year at Whitehall and again in 1612. There is no evidence of public performances of either The Tempest or A Midsummer-Night's Dream. The fact that The Tempest adheres to the classical unities is not necessarily proof that it was written for the private theatre, but one might expect that it would be more easily produced on a stage which grew out of the classical tradition. Structurally, both plays are well suited for presentation on a private stage. The wandering of characters in and out of wooded retreats could be more easily handled on a stage viewed only from one direction. It would appear ridiculous to spectators who must view the performance from galleries ranged along both sides of the stage.

Cymbeline has most of the properties of the private-stage type of play. It is presumed to have been composed about 1610, a short time after Shakespeare's

Company began presenting their winter performances at Blackfriars. It is very likely that Cymbeline was written for the Blackfriars' Stage. Simon Forman mentioned having seen the play in 1611, but did not say where. (1) If it was first presented in Blackfriars, the entrance lapses which occur I, iv, 20 and II, iii, 36 may be explained. Chambers tells us that the original factory which was adapted by Burbage for his theatre was a two-storied building. Burbage removed the floor of the upper story to give his ample space to erect galleries and to heighten and enlarge the stage. (2) He thus set for indoor theatres the pattern which was to last a long time. He was able to combine to good advantage certain properties of both the public and private theatres.

Shakespeare's three great tragedies, Macbeth, Othello, and King Lear trouble me somewhat. From the structural point of view, the three plays could be enacted with facility on either the public or the private stage. Indeed, the Quarto of 1623 informs us that Othello was enacted sundry times at the Globe and at Blackfriars. There is evidence that Macbeth was presented at court in 1606, the year that it was written.

(1) Ibid., p. 436.

(2) W. H. Chambers, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 354

This evidence along with the tribute to James,

"and some I see
That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry."
(Macbeth, IV, i, 120)

are suggestive that Macbeth was written for presentation at Whitehall. However, there is evidence that Macbeth was also acted on the public stage of The Globe in 1611. King Lear may have been presented on the public stage, but the records refer only to court presentations in 1607 and in 1608. More reassuring than the inspiration above is the mood of darkness which dominates the three plays. In every case the most dramatic and dynamic events occur at night. Lear wandered through the darkness and the storm while madness grew upon him. Macbeth twice met the witches on the darkening heath, he committed his first murder while others slept, Banquo and Fleance were waylaid in the dark and Lady Macbeth divulged her secrets as she walked in her sleep. Othello, too, has many scenes which are best presented at night. Surely Shakespeare meant these three plays to be presented in the evening on a stage where the lighting effects could be provided which would serve best to support the mood of darkness haunting these great tragedies.

The most troublesome play and the last to be discussed in this study is Pericles, Prince of Tyre. The play has all the structural characteristics of the

private play but according to the 1609 quarto, it was sundry times presented by the King's Men at the Globe. In spite of its history as a public play, I am inclined to consider it originally intended for private presentation. While there are several occasions where interior scenes follow in sequence, it is possible that some were performed on the threshold of the inner stage or perhaps, in some other way, the play was adapted to the public stage. There seems to be some doubt regarding the extent to which Shakespeare was connected with its composition. The fact that Pericles was omitted from the first two folios would suggest that those who compiled the first folios were not convinced that Shakespeare wrote the play. At any rate, it is interesting to note that Neilson relates the play to The Comedy of Errors, Twelfth Night, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest, Much Ado About Nothing, and Measure for Measure, seven of the sixteen plays which I ascribe to the private stage. (1)

I conclude, then, that the following is a reasonable division of Shakespeare's work into public and private plays, the division being based on available

(1) Neilson & Hill, Op. Cit., p.426.

evidence both from outside sources and from the plays themselves.

Public Plays

Henry VI, I, II, III

Richard III

Richard II

Henry IV, I, II

Henry V

Henry John

Henry VIII

The Merchant of Venice

Romeo and Juliet

As You Like It

Titus Andronicus

Julius Caesar

Timon of Athens

Cymbeline

Antony and Cleopatra

Two Gentlemen of Verona

The Taming of the Shrew

Twelfth Night

Private Plays

The Comedy of Errors

Love's Labour's Lost

All's Well That Ends Well

Much Ado About Nothing

Twelfth Night

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Measure for Measure

Hamlet

The Winter's Tale

A Midsummer-Night's Dream

The Tempest

Cymbeline

Macbeth

Othello

King Lear

Pericles, Prince of Tyre

CHAPTER III.

THE REASON WHY SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCES HAD
ON THE QUIET AND WORKMANSHIP OF HIS PLAYS

We are now prepared to discuss the question of the differences in quality and workmanship which were forced upon Shakespeare by the differing audiences. Doctors of Shakespeare tell us that part of the perpetual delight which they find in his plays comes from the discoveries cropping up in every reading, of new subtleties of poetic and dramatic excellence, of thought, and of technical skill which had before escaped their notice. There will be, doubtless, much that has escaped us in this survey. However, there are a few points which stand out relatively clearly.

In the first place, we notice that all the Historical Plays were written for the public theatre. Shakespeare had available the balcony and the large stage characteristic of public theatre. Thus, we find that balcony scenes and "entranced" scenes frequently mark this group of plays. Sixty-two percent of the scenes represent out-door activity, a high percentage which realises the necessity for numerous court and aristocratic

scenes. However, apart from the restrictions and the opportunities which the public stage presented, there is evidence that Shakespeare had his audience very much in mind while he wrote these plays. The heart and life of the English people have always enjoyed court pageantry. Englishmen have always taken pride in their ability in arms and in Shakespeare's day the lowliest Cockney felt himself more than a match for the French. Then, too, the average Englishman lived backward. At a time when the English people were very conscious of England's increasing power and importance among the nations, Shakespeare chose to produce his historical plays. He possibly was not setting out to rouse the rabble to any degree of patriotic fervor, but rather to produce the kind of play that would have "box-office" appeal. The historical plays tend to run to a pattern wherein the pageantry of king and court, of war and marching men, of army and war occur again and again. To suit the taste of the uncultured or gaudy, play must be lively. There must be abundant action and powerful, impressive dialogue, yet a dialogue which is simple and direct. These qualities appear in the historical plays. Each rises to a climax of mimic warfare. Fighting men high on and off the stage, they exchange blows, they are injured and killed. The dialogue is simple and direct in so far as it enhances the story but rises

or recourse to flights of historical bombast. Such were the famous speeches of Richard II, of Gaunt, of Henry IV and of Henry V. These speeches so pompously expounded would impress the "Groundling" whether he understood their significance or not. Thus Shakespeare conforms to the demands which his public forced upon him.

Much of what we have said about the historical plays may also be said about the other public plays. The little scenes of the three Roman plays, Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, and Antony and Cleopatra correspond to the like scenes in the historical plays in their power to excite the audience. Various and sometimes pompous speeches occur in As You Like It, Julius Caesar and The Merchant of Venice. The prating of Brutus, Antony, Jacques and Fortin is very impressive.

In addition, there was a type of brisk action and lively dialogue that was common to all the public plays and which must have appealed to the occupants of the pit and of the galleries alike. The misadventures of Falstaff and his rascal crew, the pranks of a playful prince, the discomfiture of a Jew, the horror scenes of Titus Andronicus, and the tawdry of a clown was the kind of material that would appeal to all. The wit of Falstaff and Prince Hal, of Rosalind and Touchstone and of Mercutio must have been a delight to the free-born

gentlemen who studied the art of quick repartee then highly fashionable.

The fact that Shakespeare wrote the public plays for a motley type of audience does not detract in any way from their excellence. Richard II, Henry IV, I and II, Henry V, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It, Julius Caesar, and Antony and Cleopatra form an imposing group. There is much brilliant workmanship, much excellent poetry, many fine character creations, some great dramatic moments, and a cast in ageless quality which has made these plays universally popular in every generation. That excellence may be due in part to the fact that the plays had to meet the approval of a most diversified audience in the public theatres of that day.

An interesting fact relating to the proposed dates of the plays may be here noted. Seventy percent of the public plays were written before 1600 while sixty-nine percent of the private plays were written after 1600. This may mean little or much. It is possible that the Lord Chamberlain was first attracted to Shakespeare's company by the skill of the actors and by the fine plays which Shakespeare was writing at the time. It is possible, also, that the Lord Chamberlain, because he was responsible for court entertainments, came to call upon and

more on his company for performances and upon Shakespeare to provide suitable plays. It was the training which Shakespeare got when writing for the public theatre with its peculiar problems of stage and audience which made it possible for him to produce the superb plays of the later period.

Two of the plays of the private group might almost be called society plays. They are Twelfth Night and As You Like It. In the preceding chapter, I called attention to Maillon's remark concerning the satire and wit which flash through Twelfth Night. We find much evidence of the fashionable affectation of wit, of quick repartee, and of a tendency to play with the language in other plays. There is much of it in As You Like It. It lends character to Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet, to Blenheim and his gay friends in The Merchant of Venice, and it becomes a dominant feature in the "court" of Malstaff. However, in these last occasions it is incidental and subordinate to the principal themes of the plays whereas, in Twelfth Night and As You Like It, this dialogue of wit is all important. It is only a little less important in Twelfth Night and in The Merry Wives of Windsor. This extremely light comedy reveals, it seems to me, Shakespeare's desire to suit his play to the taste of his audience, in this case the

fascinating young intellectuals in and about the court.

Pornographic literature has had its ups and downs throughout the centuries. In the Elizabethan age as in our own, immoral literature had its devotees and its bitter opponents. Puritanism, we may be sure, was not a trait of the people who frequented the public and private theatres, but it was a trait of the powerful middle class people who frowned upon the theatre because they considered it a den of iniquity. The fine moral precepts which characterize Shakespeare's work secure us of the high moral caliber of the dramatist. His philosophy of life was supreme though there is no evidence of any philosophical system in his plays. Moreover, he was too much a product of his age and environment to be a puritan. He did not hesitate to introduce filthy characters, foul remarks and sexy situations if he felt that it would enhance the dramatic effect which he sought. While he did not write pornographically, certain of his scenes would be as delightful to the low buffed element in his audience as if he had written for the sake of filth, and at the same time the scene could be misinterpreted by those who looked upon the theatre with distaste. My point is that in the private plays there is relatively more of this type of dialogue than in the public plays. The welfare of the public theatre was near to Shakespeare's heart

and purse. I suggest that he was restrained from the use of filthy and suggestive dialogue by a sincere desire to improve the reputation of the public theatre. He was not under the same restraint when writing for the private audience.

Another manner in which Shakespeare approaches his private audience is revealed in the tragi-comedies. These plays are actually a tribute to the culture, intelligence and understanding of the people who attended the private performances. The plays stand out in marked contrast to the public plays. Whereas the public plays are clear, direct and plausible, the tragi-comedies are inclined to be obscure and at times verging on the absurd. Wilson says,

"In the brand of tragi-comedy of which Cymbeline is typical the wildest gamut of emotion, sensation and surprise was enjoined."

Dr. Frothingham has stated,

"Elizabethan fiction falls roughly into two classes, tales of the unvarnished realities of life, and romances of love-making and adventure in an idealized world of the imagination." (1)

Only an audience familiar with the literary trends of that day could properly appreciate the remarkable interplay of

(1) Frothingham, F. W., The Story of English Literature,
New York 1931, p.124.

fantasy and the fantastic which characterizes the tragic-comedies. It may be here noted that Beaumont and Fletcher wrote in the same vein. The fact that they wrote primarily for the court adds to the certainty that Shakespeare's tragic-comedies were written for the private audience.

In this work I have endeavored to prove that Shakespeare wrote sometimes for the very diversified audience of the public theatre and sometimes for the much more restricted and cultured audience in the private theatres. We have seen that differences in stage arrangements evidently affected the structural development of the plays. In public theatre plays, he made frequent use of the balcony, he was able to keep his actors detached from one another if need be, he had room for spectacles involving war scenes, pageantry and displays. At the same time restrictions were placed upon him. His plays must suit the afternoon atmosphere, they must meet the problem of a single drama, the outer stage must not be cluttered up with properties that might interfere with the view of any portion of his audience, and his plays must conform to the taste of not one group but of a most varied type of audience. While conforming to the taste of the public audience, he must avoid anything that ^{which} would add to the ill repute of the public theatres.

The private theatre offered him certain opportunities which he used to advantage. The entire domain permitted greater freedom in the arrangement of scenes, scenic gowns backdrops were at his disposal, and properties could be so arranged that an out-front audience would have no difficulty viewing the play. Curtain screens made possible the startling revelations which characterized the tragicomedies. Eavesdroppers could be suitably hidden. Above all, the indoor stage with its artificial lighting provided a new and powerful factor in enhancing the world of the play. We have seen that in a number of the later private plays, the mood of darkness and mystery is dominant. There were restrictions, too, forced upon Shakespeare by the private stage. When, in Rich. III About Nothing, a balcony was required, Shakespeare forgone the opportunity of a very dramatic scene by having Borachio describe the event on the balcony. (III, iii, 152). Shakespeare may have found that the smaller and more encumbered stage interfered with the freedom and movement of his actors. He was forced to depend more on dialogue and less upon action. However, he now had an audience capable of understanding and enjoying a drama in which psychological situations and searing passions had come to

replace the heartiest and boldest of the public plays.

And now in conclusion, let us glance quickly over the content of this survey. In it, I have attempted to establish the fact that Shakespeare was faced with the problem of writing for two quite distinct audiences and of adapting his plays to two theatres quite distinct in structure and properties. We have examined the theatres and their stages. We have noted that each offered certain advantages but that each had its limitations. From our knowledge of stage conditions and from existing records, we have been able to divide the plays into two groups, those designed for the public stage and those designed for the private stage. Lastly, we have examined some of the ways in which the quality and workmanship of Shakespeare's plays have been affected by the fact that he was writing sometimes for the ^{rough} audience of a public theatre and sometimes for the more intelligent and cultured audience which attended the private performances.

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